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CUCHULAIN,
OISIN THE HERO.
A Cycle of Plays.

California
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A. E.

CUCHULAIN.



A CYCLE OF IRISH PLAYS

BY

SUSEEN VARIAN,

WITH

OISIN THE HERO,

BY

JOHN VARIAN.



DUBLIN :

SEALY, BRYERS & WALKER,

MIDDLE ABBEY STREET.



Dedicated to

DARK ROSALEEN.

AND

FOUR OF HER TRUE LOVERS.

(*E. Young, Dr. Sigerson, "Conn," "Æ."*)

CYCLE OF CUCHULAIN PLAYS.

WOOING OF EMER.

No. 1.



SCENE.—Lug Lochita—The gardens of Lugh—
Emer, her married sister Fiall, and their
foster sisters, sitting at work.



Una.—Come now, White Emer! make this
robe fall gracefully.

Emer.—I cannot drop my thread of gold.
The wheel swings smoothly round; but Mau-
reen, with her eye of truth, can train the fold.

Maureen.—(Standing away to view Brideen.)
—I have crowned Brideen, and I cannot leave my
work half done, her dress must flower as her
dear head doth bloom, with nature's sweetest
gifts; she is my flower queen—when that great
shadow reaches to the dun, I shall be ready
with my help for thee.

(In a distant corner some girls are talking.)

1st Girl calls—

1st Girl.—Fiall, thou who knowest men, tell
us are there any worthy of our Emer's truth;
hast seen a warrior such as her chief should be.
Are there such good men born, grown old in
manly strength and warlike prowess, keeping
the Spirit young?

Fiall.—She is my gentle flower ! Pride of the Grianan ! Noblest of women !

Maureen.—Queen of the six gifts, each in it self a dower.

Una.—First is her beauty ; then her gift of voice.

Brideen.—She hath the sweetest speech on all the earth.

Maureen.—Then comes her power to perform, her helpful hand can move the heavy and the light with equal ease.

1st Girl.—And she can ply the needle with such subtle skill, it nearly blinds the sight of others standing by.

Fiall.—And then as Crown, her wisdom and her charity stand forth our pride.

Emer.—Sister, why dost thou humble me ; thou shouldst not flatter thus ; it is a perfect woman thou hast traced. I have known many rise o'er me in grace, soar high in beauty, as the singing lark doth wing it o'er the wren, and half their charm is their simplicity. Listen ! I hear a sound : a whirring sound, a sound of chariot wheels ! Fiall, my sister, thou of the long sight, come to the Seeing Mound, and tell us from that height what thou canst see. (Fiall and Emer walk to the mound together.)

(Fiall shading her eyes from top of mound).

Fiall.—There is a noble youth in fair attire ; he springs into the air and makes the heroes' salmon leap. Radiant he comes ; his chariot in the sun gleams bright with gold and silver ! His flying horses dash the flinty road in sparks of light ; they run together fierce and strong ;

the grey seems all on fire, and by him runs his peer, with slender legs and great black haunches, trembling with the pride of life. Sister! 'tis a king who joins us here. I cannot see him now, for he has left the open road and rides beneath the hill.

(They all return to their occupations and Maureen goes to the Seeing Mound. A horn is heard.)

Scene 2.

(Maureen, in a loud, excited whisper).—Hither he comes as radiant as the sun: his flaming locks in endless lustre gleam. (Clasps her hands.) Oh, glorious is this man! Oh, he is strong!

(A short pause, and Cuchulain comes, and goes straight up to Emer, then, having saluted her, he turns to all and salutes them.)

Cuchulain.—May Aengus ever smile on ye, fair maids.

(Emer lifts her eyes from her wheel and sees her future chief. They stand and gaze at each other. Emer rises slowly.)

Emer.—May Lugh preserve thee, noble youth.

Cuchulain.—Sweet maiden of the whitest throat and breast, may blessings ever girdle thee!

Emer.—Whence comest thou?

Cuchulain.—From Emania.

Emer.—Who was thy father? Who thy fosterer?

Cuchulain.—I had two fosterers, and two fathers have been mine—Lugh Lamfada, son of Lir, the father whom I love the best—and Sualtach, husband of Dechtire, who, with her fifty maids as white birds left their home, entered in the gardens of my father Lugh, where I was born! These birds brought Concobar unto the dun wherein I lay alone.

I have been fostered from that hour by his highest chiefs. When I was five I fared me forth to find the King, and Lugh, my father, straightened out the road, and led me there in safety. Fergus MacRoigh played chess with Concobar upon the green; when I arrived he took me to his heart and fostered me. And thou, oh maid, what now of thee?

Emer.—Tara among women I am called; a dun of strength mid maids; a watcher that sees no one; a torch which none comes nigh—the daughter of a King, I have my champions brave.

Cuchulain.—Dun of true hearts! wilt also reckon me among these men? Oh! glorious deeds were mine if thou would'st look on me. (They walk off among the trees: exeunt Emer and Cuchulain).

Fiall.—Charioteer, whence come ye? Who is thy warrior? His eye hath piercing lustre in its depth; he moveth as a chief, but on his head he beareth not the weight of manly years. Tell me of him.

Laeg.—He is Cuchulain, chief of the Red Branch, sent forth to win his wife. All queens find him a joy unto their hearts; but none hath he found worthy of his truth. My warrior's

youth bindeth ten years in one. He overcometh time—once when——(they walk off talking.—Emer and Cuchulain enter talking.)

Emer.—Where didst thou sleep?

Cuchulain.—At the house of him who tends the herds of Tethra.

Emer.—Which way did'st thou come?

Cuchulain.—Out of the night between the mountain and the wood, over the great secret of the Tuatha de Danaan, through the Murrigu's garden, over the washing places of the horses of Dea, on the rays of the sun, to the four corners of the earth, over great crime, to the white daughter of Tethra's nephew, King of the Fomorians.

(Una and Brideen are standing, their arms circling each other. Laeg comes to them.)

Laeg.—The sun protect thee maiden of the flowers, may I have speech of thee?

Brideen.—Thou art a guest whose voice rings kind and true. Tell us of thy chief?

Laeg.—He is the hero of that madness which plagues warriors.

Brideen.—Has he such strength?

Laeg.—He is the champion shield of Ulad, though so young; I was his charioteer when all alone he fought a hundred men and routed them. He is the son of Lugh: his strength cannot be overcome; when weakest he defendeth twenty, a third part of his strength for thirty. Hosts of armed men fly at sight of him.

Una.—He seemeth but a tender boy; surely he hath not yet reached strength enough for chariot chief.

Laeg.—Truly, oh maiden, he is young ; but he was nurtured unto strength by Concobar. He gave him Blai the lord of Lands, and Fergus of the Sword, Sencha strong and wise, swift and deft ; Amergin the poet at his knee he knelt, for love of Dechtire (his mother) Cathbad taught him druid peace. But unto none my warrior yielded thanks save Concobar of the victorious arm, who nurtured him himself. My memory leapeth back o'er many years. I see Setanta on that day he came unto Emania ; a hundred warriors' sons played hurley on the green ; he joined our sport ; we fought, and forced him to do battle ; then when red fury flamed in him, he hunted us to seek protection from the King and Fergus, who caught him in his arms and called him foster-son—(they walk backwards)—shall I relate how the brave Setanta won his name of Cu——

(Cuchulain and Emer come forward.)

Cuchulain.—And thou, how hast thou been fostered in the gardens of bright Lugh ?

Emer.—Truly, it is not hard to tell ; in ancient virtues of our land I grew—rank equal to a queen, keeping the laws of Lir in stateliness of form and every noble grace among our women.

Cuchulain.—Hitherto I have not found a maiden capable of holding converse with me, and so 'tis fitting we become as one.

Emer.—One question I must ask—hast thou a wife ?

Cuchulain.—Nay ! never before have I seen maid that I would wed. Princess ! thou art the well of beauty—now I should go—'tis woe to me until I come again—I seek thy father and shall win thy hand to take thee home. Have I thy good will ?

Emer.—I wait thee here ; if ten years pass by, no other hand shall clasp this hand of mine.

Cuchulain.—And should thy father still refuse, wilt thou come home with me ?

Emer.—I cannot think it sooth, for he loves me ; but I would hear of thy success before this feast which I have promised to my father ; he hath pledged his word to Tara's King that I shall go with him. My troth is not for Lugaid !

Cuchulain.—May blessing ever rise to thee, thou mystery of beautiful, proud womanhood. Farewell—my Queen.

(Exit Cuchulain.)

(CURTAIN.)

Scene 3.

(Enter Lugaid.)

Lugaid.—Now, lady, give me thy commands, for thy true knight am I. Bid me to fight a hundred men and I will do thy bidding.

Emer.—Would'st thou lay down thy life for me ?

Lugaid.—I swear to thee, White Swan.

(Emer places a hand upon either cheek and gazes deep into his eyes.)

Emer.—Wilt thou perform my bidding?

Lugaid.—It is a joy for me, and I do swear by sun and moon, by the long-ridged earth and the fierce-flowing sea.

Emer (still clasping his head).—Then listen while I speak. I have had homage from the wise and great, but never felt one thrill of aught but mirth, or pity for that strength which bowed to me, who am so weak.

Lugaid.—Oh, beautiful, indeed, thou art in all thy woman's pride.

Emer (releases him and smiles to herself in thought).—Yesterday the pride of mountains lay within my soul; the sun shone gloriously, and while he rose into the highest sky, there came the master of my life to claim the love that thou wouldst have—a golden flame encircled him and me, a flood of joyous light came with Cuchulain, Knight of the Red Branch, and now I love him; I die if thou dost stand between.

I brought thee here alone to cast my geasa over thee—thou must not come to me, for I have won my woman's crown, and though my father's pledge is thine, thou shalt not come—for truly great art thou! As, noble knight, thou'lt keep my secret as thy life—now promise me?

Lugaid.—Oh, Emer hast no pity in thy heart, thou keeper of my soul! It is a cruel task thou givest me—must I obey? Why have I pledged my fealty to thee?

Emer.—Now I shall feast in glad content, and thou shalt carry with thee greater love than if we had been bound in bonds.

ACT 2.

(Enter Forgal Monach, Emer's father.)

Forgal.—Emer, art ready for the feast! Lugaid hast had sweet converse with thy love!

Lugaid.—She is the gold that shines above all gems.

Forgal.—I give her unto thee, that we may be united in our hopes. With forces strongly knit in love, most surely shall we win great lands for this my child—thy Queen.

Lugaid.—Oh, wise man! Canst thou compel her love. 'Tis love that I would have. The fairest form on all the earth enshrines a spirit whose proud will can brook no stay. The flaming jewel of her love, is the great treasure I would claim of thee—that gift would make my hand so masterful and strong, that I would gain whate'er I willed. Oh! I would make her royal state an unimagined majesty.

Forgal.—My daughter shall obey, and reign in this green land from sea to sea. United, we shall govern the earth.

Lugaid.—Forgal, win me true love. I would not value a coerced love. For love coerced is hate disguised, and so made venomous.

Scene 2.

(Outside a Minstrel is singing and playing on his harp.)

Minstrel.—

There is a lady gentle as the breeze,
Strong as the wind,
Her frown would cause this heart to freeze;
Yet, were she kind,
The wings of joy would lift me o'er the trees.

She breathed so truly on my youth and smiled,
Giving me hope,
Oh! I must win her love and be her shield,
That I may cope
With every ill that cruel hate can wield.

I will be ready at her slightest call
To die for her,
I live for her, and give her all,
My distant star,
If she were mine, I could win great and small.

Oh, call me, lady! Tell me of thy need!
My truth to prove,
I long for thy command to do some deed
And show my love,
Give me thy favour and I shall succeed.

(Enter Minstrel.)

Emer.—Welcome, fair minstrel, to our grianan gate; what means this mystic chant—this secret song of thine?

Minstrel.—Light of a noble heart! I would hold converse in thine ear—thou glorious star, shining upon a lonely wanderer, make his dark spirit beam in fervent bliss; receive from him who worships thee this gem as token; thus he salutes his sun (kisses her hand).

(Aside.)—(Cuchulain of the Red Branch sends it thee).

Emer (aside).—This treasure shall not leave my keeping, day nor night. (Aloud.)—Father, I pray thee place this poet at thy board, that he may sing to us anon and tell me of the glories in the sky, and all the future mysteries that hang o'erhead. Mayhap thou hast been with some chief whose deeds thou canst recite.

Forgal.—Come, minstrel, seat thee there and eat; my daughter rules it here to-night; she giveth her love troth unto this King, and when twelve moons have made their course around the blue vault of the silent sky, he shall come back to claim his wife. Eat, then, and sing to us of beauty and of love?

Lugaid.—Drink to the lady Emer: fill every goblet full; she reigns the Queen in Aengus' Court. I would the glory of his crown were mine.

Minstrel (aside).—His hand doth lead Cuchulain here to take this stately beauty from her nest and carry her a willing captive home to Emain Macha.

Lugaid.—I would that I could sing my love and homage with a tongue like thine.

Emer.—I thank thee for thy singing; it doth touch my soul as nought hath done, for many, many days. Here is a verse I wish thee learn for me, and sing to-morrow at this hour. 'Tis writ by one about a loving tryst to be performed and I have never heard its melody.

Minstrel.—Princess, to do thy bidding is my joy.

Emer.—Father, I am weary of the feast; may I retire until to-morrow's sun doth bid me rise.

Forgal.—Go, daughter, for thou needest rest, and take thy maidens with thee that they may be fresh and sweet as thou to-morrow's morn.

(Exeunt Emer and women.)

Forgal.—The court is over, as its queen hath flown.

(Exeunt).

Act 3.—TABLEAU.—Cuchulain waits at the trysting tree.

(Enter Emer).

Emer.—I leave a lesser love to fly from slavish life, and join thy fire. I cannot, though my noble sire doth think it well, bind down my soul to the dead life that he doth wish for me. Lugaid is great Ard Righ, yet not my peer. I fly from him to thee, my comrade chief; my man of men—thou chieftain of my heart—the noblest soul on earth—my happiness—my king. I leave my land, the flowers, all that I have known, to go with thee, my heart's desire! I know not how or where with thee I go, and thee I trust (they embrace).

Cuchulain.—Pulse of my heart! Light of my soul! Thou mistress of my will.

(Exeunt and Curtain.)

CUCHULAIN'S GLORY.



SCENE—Cuchulain and Laeg coming from their sleeping place at the back of stage.



Cuchulain.—Thou sayest the singing shield disturbed thy rest—thou of the ear and eye. Before we started on this quest of Maive in dream I saw my father Lugh; he came holding a cup of fire in one hand, while in the other flashed his mighty sword—a boding of great battle this to me! Now Ferdia, whose honour is inviolate, comes down unto the ford, the royal brooch of Maive upon his breast as sign of sonship. Before I can fulfil my fate I shall clasp sorrow with her bloodshot eyes unto my heart, and see the woe of death.

Laeg.—Lugh is thy Protector, and I know great Tethra's light beams not for thee: our country needs thine arm. It is no warrior's trick to make a good retreat.

Cuchulain.—Beyond the beach the mighty hand of Maive moves restlessly. The heavens are o'er our heads, the earth is under us, the sea encompasses around about. Unless the heavens with all their shower of stars fall to the earth—unless the same earth burst about our feet—unless the blue-faced sea submerge the universe, I shall withstand this woman warrior.

Laeg.—Maive were a man but for her woman's guile ; a woman she is sure, in her great charm. She sent for thee ! What words had she to say ?

Cuchulain.—Thou knowest how my arrows strike the heart at distances by her best chiefs unknown, and how I followed her upon this raid, thinning the border of her mantle brave, until she fears my enmity, and by great love would bind me as her son. She offered me for wife her daughter Findabar, but I woo Emer as my Queen ; none else shall bide as wife of mine.

Laeg.—What were thy words to Maive ?

Cuchulain.—To her I uttered greetings courteously, and her I thanked, but said that Emer could no rival have within my heart, and then I prayed a boon, that while I fought each champion from her host at yonder ford, no raider should place foot upon my land of Ulad—graciously consenting, she exclaimed against our King for leaving one so young to face such fearful odds. Now, shall we show this woman who I am, and prove my King might well have placed a weaker stay against her hand.

Laeg.—Ulad is safe !

Cuchulain.—Lo ! Maive moves downward to the ford. My battle spears prepare, for I must slay the noble Ferdia—him whom I love. I cannot pause, for I must save my country's honour—do thou keep watch for Concobar. I would hold converse with my father Lugh.

(Exit Cuchulain ; enter Fergus).

Fergus.—Where is Cuchulain? I come here privately to warn him that Queen Maive has promised Findabar (the beam of light) to Ferdia if he doth kill his friend. So madly doth he love that maid that he has sworn to slay thy warrior.

Laeg.—Cuchulain fears no man upon the ridge of war. The druid Calatin with his twenty-seven venomous sons set on him at the ford, and still he lives; a band of warriors an hundred strong placed all their weight against his to drive him thence, and thou, his foster father, came, and had to beg him fly for sake of thy good name. So why come jesting here? The guileful Maive, with all her wiles, hurts not Cuchulain.

Fergus.—I come to clasp him to my heart, and say that I shall never meet him more in enmity. Where now is Concoibar, that he delays to succour my brave fosterling. (Enter Cuchulain). My son, I came to see unto thy wounds, and clasp thee to this heart. That ford has seen the death of many by thy hand, whom I have counted as the bravest warriors in the host of Maive.

Cuchulain.—Great Lugh has gazed within my eyes and I am strong.

Laeg.—His eyes flash with the light of seven gems. His cheeks glow with the flame of seven suns. His hands can tear great trees from out the earth. He is prepared for battle with the best. Fear not for him. Master! Cuchulain! Here is thy shield, bright as the glowing sun, and here the helmet for thy noble head. Now, Fergus, go to Maive, and tell her how Cuchulain bears the fight.

Fergus.—I shall most surely say he has no equal save his father Lugh.

SCENE II.—First red dawn of morning.
Ferdia comes on the stage above the Ford and lies down to sleep.

(Enter Cuchulain and Laeg).

Cuchulain.—Now sleeps Ferdia, and dreams perchance of the old days, when we companions were in Scathach's school. Companions and true friends ; now foes !

(Cuchulain and Laeg come down to the Ford).

Cuchulain.—Ho, Ferdia ! my brother ; thou with whom in love I ate and slept, and learned the manly arts. Must I behold thee stand mine enemy ? Oh Ferdia ! I must slay thee, or die.

(Ferdia strides towards him with arms outstretched, and they embrace ; then Ferdia, stepping backward, places his hand on Cuchulain's shoulder).

Ferdia.—Thou wast the younger pupil in the Scathach days, and looked to me for guidance. Fly from thy death ; my sword doth spring into my hand, and clamoureth for blood.

Cuchulain.—In Alba I was young, but here, Oh, Ferdia ! I am old and strong. Let us begin. Choose thou the weapons. The champion fortress of my land am I, and naught but death shall conquer me.

Ferdia.—My memory holdeth our great games in Alba with the missive weapons. Those moon like blades that fly as sunbeams through the air. Let us have missive weapons for our fight to-day.

Cuchulain.—We will begin on yonder beach.

(*Exeunt.* As they go off, Maive enters, and her warriors make a roof of their shields over her head. Laeg stands gazing at the fight that is going on just below. He calls excitedly).

Laeg (calling).—Cuchulain, thine old wounds bleed and make thee weak ; the mighty Ferdia doth treat thee with disdain ; he playeth with thee to amuse his Queen !

(Cuchulain's war-cry is heard, and a great crash of arms. Again Cuchulain and Laeg give the battle shout together. Then Cuchulain comes back to the stage for a moment and calls).

Cuchulain.—Give me my great sword ! 'Tis war to the death ! Ah Ferdia (sorrowfully).

Laeg.—He is thy master ! he will not slay thee, *boy* ! (Cuchulain raises his war-cry in Irish, and rushes off). Great master ! None can withstand thee now. 'Tis *fear* to look upon his face. The red of wrath upon him blindeth me ; the blaze of battle in his eyes will stab great Ferdia. A fearful many-coloured giant he becomes. The great, the valiant champion in his perfect height rears his proud head o'er Ferdia. Ha ! Behold ! The hideous Murrighu assaileth him ! He smiteth her.

Maive.—The gods are fighting here to-day, for nothing else could save these masters of the art of war. No fresh wounds mar their beauty. Standing there each man appears a god. No ; not through travail, nor through terror, can they be overthrown.

Laeg.—Oh, he is caught about the feet!

Maive.—Cuchulain has a wound! His warrior passion comes to him; he towers over Ferdia. Oh that Cuchulain were my man.

(Becomes much excited, and calls Ferdia's war-cry with him).

(Cuchulain calls).

Cuchulain (from the ford).—Give me the gae-bulga.

(Exit *Laeg*).

Maive.—There is a darkness and great fury in the air. I see bochamachs and banachs, and the wild men of the glen, between me and the sun. Cuchulain grows too bright to look upon; fire streams from him. Ah! see! gae-bulga! that wand of death is floating down the tide. 'Tis caught. Cuchulain's aim is death! Ah woe!

(*Maive* goes back among her warriors).

(*Ferdia* groans).

Ferdia (from ford).—The end is now indeed! I fall by the gae-bulga! Oh, hound of beautiful feats thou art alive, and I am glad.

(Cuchulain takes *Ferdia* in his arms and carries him on the stage. *Laeg* enters with them).

Laeg.—Rise now, Oh Cuchulain, for the men of *Maive* advance on us; it is not single combat they will give us, since *Ferdia*, son of *Damas*, son of *Dare*, is fallen.

Cuchulain (sorrowfully).—Oh *Ferdia*, my friend! That thou should'st die and I remain. With *Scathach* we resolved that through all

time great love would join us twain. Dear unto me was thy great height, thy perfect, ruddy form; thy grey-blue eye so clear, and dear thy wisdom and thine eloquence. (Hands clasped in grief, he continues to gaze on Ferdia). Go, Laeg, find me that brooch that I may see the little thing that drew my soul friend unto death.

(Laeg gives him the brooch).

Cuchulain (taking brooch and talking to it).—*For this* he came to combat with his friend; *for this!* he fought; *for this!* he fell. (He throws it on the ground and stamps on it). Thus would I crush deceit. All combat unto me was sport until I came to fight with Ferdia. (Standing with arms outstretched in grief over Ferdia).

CUCHULAIN'S LAMENT.*

Play was each, pleasure each,
'Till Ferdia faced the beach;
Dear that pillar of pure gold,
Who fell cold beside the ford;
Hosts of heroes felt his sword,
First in battle's breach.

Play was each, pleasure each,
'Till Ferdia faced the beach;
Lion fiery, fierce, and bright,
Wave, whose might no thing withstands,
Sweeping, with the shrinking sands,
Horror o'er the beach.

Play was each, pleasure each,
'Till Ferdia faced the beach;
Loved Ferdia, dear to me,
I shall dree his death for aye,
Yesterday a Mountain he,
But a Shade to-day.

* (Translated from the Irish by Dr. Sigerson).

EMER'S JEALOUSY.



SCENE.—Emer crowned with heather bloom
—a circle of lovely girls, who are dressing
each other, in flowers; she's telling
fortunes. Others are sitting at spinning
and work of different kinds.



Emer.—Oh, Brideen! I can see upon thy hand a cross of deep and dark significance, thy love will lose his life in battle, blood will flow in rivers at his death. (Young girl comes to Emer with her palms stretched forward). No, Una! ask me not now to read thy fate; not now! the time is Samhain, ask not to-day; were this moon passed then would thy hand-line mystery appear in brighter hue. Come, let us climb yon heather hill and breathe the mountain air, listening in silence by that rippling stream for fairy bells to tell of bygone nations here. I long to feel the freshening breeze and thrill in glorious sympathy with soaring birds; to pour my song of praise, and greet the sun in joy. I would extend my arms with the green trees in ecstasy of life. (Child coming with hands extended to have her fortune told).

Small Child.—Mother! tell me.

Emer.—No! little one (takes her in her arms and kisses her; then places her in Brideen's arms).

(Enter Cuchulain E.)

Emer (to Cuchulain).—Love, come, climb ! Oh ! I would race thee round the world, breast the clear air, soar on wings of birds, dive with the bright fishes in the sea ; the wind of life blows round my heart ; the sun caresses me. Oh, it is glorious just to feel and be ! Cuchulain ! as I sat in happy thought, I heard again thy splendid voice. A bee's wing fanned my cheek as he went by, searching each flowery cup for its sweet gift, and I in cruel joy chased wildly after him until I saw again a vision of thine eye's grey justice ; Chief—'twas then I knew my cruelty. Where hast thou been ?

Cuchulain.—My geasa held me in the land of sleep, where Fand caressed my head, and soundless lessons entered in my soul. She taught of Erin, brilliant flower of the sea, how she would lose her splendour. Her future will be blessed by Mananan with want and pain, thus she will learn reliance on herself through many shattered hopes ; and when she sweepeth onward to her goal she'll bear the sword of Lugh to other lands and bring her knowledge unto them ; for half their people will be children of her sons—*may they return with lovelight in their souls.* Dear heart of joy ! I would 'twere in my power to bring thee unto Fand. Why dost thou turn from me ?

Emer.—Thou dreamest night and day of Fand, thou carest more for one glance from her eye than anything on earth.

Una.—Now Brideen ! Emer, see my flowers kiss her throat.

Emer.—My lamp of beauty !—(kisses her). The Sun is gone, even his glorious garments leave the sky, soon all will be in silent sym-

pathy with sleep, the crescent of the moon will change her cloudlike beauty, to a solemn stately beam of restful peace. Come, let us go within.

(Exeunt).

(After a time Cuchulain comes out).

Cuchulain.—The stars pour out their beams in twinkling light. The moon in her sweet majesty sails onward, through the deep blue infinite of Lir; her blessed rays pour o'er my soul in solemn silence, as I step out fearlessly unto the land beyond, where all is golden flame. Oh, Fand, come wrap me in the starry cloak of Lir.

(Reclines gazing on the moon).

Fand.—(Calls from a distance)—Cuchulain! Come!

Cuchulain.—Gentle love! I know thy voice so soft and clear. Let me behold the grace of thy white form. Thou wonder of the heavens!

(Fand appears at back of stage).

Fand.—Cuchulain!

Cuchulain.—Mistress of my soul!

Fand.—My Friend! (Thou well-beloved son of Lugh)—What life-gift hast thou brought. Yes, I would go and live with thee, if she, who rests upon thy love, Emer (thy wife) would send her blessing here, but Balor's gloom comes over me. I fear! I fear! What blessing hast thou brought?

Cuchulain.—I won the battle of the Ford, I bring it thee a gift.

Fand.—Lugh fought that battle for thee. Is it thine to give?

Cuchulain.—I have foretold—I bring thee my fore-knowledge.

Fand.—It is not thine, the great God Mananan gave thee thy second sight. Hast thou brought nothing of thine own?

Cuchulain.—Oh, Fand! I bring my strongest will. I ever had the power to succeed, and if thou leadest me (thou child of Lir) we shall do much. Come with me, that my Emer of the gentle hand may greet thy love. White mystery of fire!

Fand.—Thou'st brought a noble gift, indeed; make it thine own. My father's love shall give me unto thee when Emer calls. I wait the glory of that hour, when I shall teach her children; gain her sympathy; sail on a boundless sea of hope and happiness, a wondrous melody of love; working my father's will.

(Enter Emer).

Emer.—I cannot sleep!—for loneliness hangs like a pall about my heart. I seek Cuchulain everywhere—only to hold his hand doth comfort me.—(sees him lying at her feet).

Ah! his geasa claims him! He lies in one of his deep sleeps more soundly lulled than on the softest couch. Oh! that I might waken him! But no! he must lie here all through the night and many, many hours

into the day, and though I dare not speak to him he wanders in the spirit where I cannot go. He gains unknown delight with fairy Fand.

(She goes away and leaves him, and then comes running as though to shake him). Then stands restrained.

Emer.—I must not waken him !

May Tethra's gloom claim Fand !

(Turns away).

Oh love, come back !

(Turns again as though to waken him—goes instead into the Dun and brings out a wolf's skin which she throws over him. She walks up and down).

Emer.—My jealousy of Fand doth burn me up. He is my husband, and all mine. The man who promised me undying love. Why does he leave me even in his sleep ? May blackest gloom possess her ! My curses strike like hot knives through the heart. May she find nothing good in life, may all its harmony and love change to a clanging discord—fierce demons of the air shall circle her. Cuchulain ! I would slay thee where thou liest now ; but thou wouldst go to Fand to wander in her father's isle happy for ever more. May all my miseries make burning brands to rend her soul. I curse thee, Fand !

(Stands at a short distance from Cuchulain with arms outstretched).

Emer.—Cuchulain ! Come to me.

(Kneels beside him and sobs).

(Enter Una, Emer's foster child, who, finding her thus, is frightened and calls).

(Child, calling)—Bridget! Fiall! Maureen! Una of the Sword! Dechtere! Lavarcam! Come to my foster mother, she crieth here in pain. Come, help!

(Embraces Emer and takes her head on her breast. Enter a crowd of women, and Emer lifts her head and sees them; she jumps to her feet).

Emer.—May the Murrigu bring me unto Fand, Cuchulain loves her; she has tempted him with light and sound and beauty, and with love for me. She is a fiend! the five great powers will pour into my life, and I will own unconquerable strength. Brave friends! let us don armour for the fight; she tells Cuchulain that she wishes but to give her gold to me, and place her crown upon my daughter's head, thus openly she schemes to win from me her love. My girl shall never touch one gift of hers! She is untrue, and makes pretence of love. Friends, I must head an army when we meet! my life is barren, thinking of her power! The flames of hate do burn me up! Oh! I am weak! brave women! arm ye for a noble war; and send this child to me with sword and shield.

(Exit all but Emer. Cuchulain opens his eyes).

Cuchulain.—Emer wilt come with me to Fand. We two in spirit life bound hand in hand, could move all hate from Erin of the sea.

Emer.—Black death shall claim thy Fand, for she has stolen thee from me !

(Cuchulain starts in dismay.)

Cuchulain (very gently).—My woman of the gentle hand ! Oh ! Love ! Why let me hear such words. She loveth thee, waiteth, to give thee all she has ; to place upon thy head her crown of gold, thou dost not understand. She teaches me to love as thou thyself cannot ; here is a good and great nobility.

Emer.—As mine is not ! How am I to see thy truth, when all too well I know thou canst not cease from praising her.

Cuchulain.—Emer ! She hath kept me true to thee ! She teaches me her greatness, and I come with hands and heart all full like hers. 'Tis she has taught me love's great mystery. I love thee with a passion all unknown. Her purity doth keep me true.

Emer.—I will not owe thy love to Fand. Tell me---Oh tell me nothing good of her ! She knows I hold thee by me while awake, so stealthily she claims thy sleep.

Cuchulain.—My love ; she hopeth soon to take thee to her land and teach thee all her powers ; to love thee with the love that she gives me. Emer, my heart ! Do not refuse thy friend—the right hand of Great Lir.

Emer.—She shall not give thee love ; thou art all mine ! mine ! mine ! only mine ! my husband ! the hate within this breast will kill both her and thee ! go bring her here that she may see how I can love.

Cuchulain.—Emer ! (reproachfully).

Emer.—Oh ! Thou shalt see !

Cuchulain.—My love ! thou art my queen, and now thou art far dearer than that day I fought thy father and his warriors. Dost thou remember how I used my sling for ten long miles ; while our true Laeg steered Grey of Macha and Black Sainglend, over ford and fen that bound thy father's land. I cannot battle with thy jealousies, but let me prove my love by fighting twice ten miles, and five men for each warrior whom that day I fought—bid me to span the earth about on my good steed, or bid me fast with hunger for long days, and I will win by my obedience. But ask not, love : forgetfulness of Fand. She is my noble teacher, is my better self—(beseechingly)—Give her thy love.

Emer.—Well, bring her here, and I shall see.

(Cuchulain calls on Fand while walking off).

Cuchulain.—Oh Fand ! At last my Emer sends for thee, and I am glad to think how all our lives shall pass in beauty when thou bringest her to Lir.

(Exit Cuchulain, enter little girl with armour which Emer puts on. The women all come in dressed for battle).

Emer.—The moon is gone, the wind blows high, as though the battle fury of my soul had stirred all life to sympathy, the trees swing out and wave their mighty arms, a fiery breath in

nature mingles with my hate, but nothing can come near the passion in my heart. Oh ! I will slay that wicked Fand.

Blow wind ! flash light ! O joy to me—
For I shall see mine enemy.

(Laughs wildly.)

Blow wind ! wail trees !
Oh misery,
For I shall see mine enemy.

(Another laugh.)

Blow wind ! Lir calls—
Oh ecstasy,
For I shall slay mine enemy.
Lugh claps his hands for me !
Joy ! Joy ! Joy !

(Enter Cuchulain.)

Cuchulain.—Dear love, I do not know thee with such fires in thy soul ; look in mine eyes and see the love that slumbers there ; lay thy red lips on mine. I care for nothing now, save thy glad purity. Oh do not break thy life by causing woe, but join with me in worship of the sun. Forget that Fand doth come. I promise I shall never go to her while thy love keeps me here.

(He holds his arms open while she lays her head on his shoulder, and he caresses her head and soothes her. Fand enters behind Cuchulain ; he has forgotten her ; she sees his caresses of Emer, and is glad. When Emer sees her she stiffens all over. Fand, who has her hand held out with a smile, becomes perplexed, and the smile fades into fear ; she trembles and shrinks away).

Fand.—Oh ! Why this hate ? I cannot understand.

(Exit with a moaning cry).

Cuchulain.—White Sister Fand come back ! Emer, thou art no wife of mine ! Thou flame from Ballor's wand, I cannot love thee more, for thou dost hate ; and the pure fire from Angus' golden crown can never touch thy head.

Emer.—Cuchulain ! Curse me not !

Cuchulain.—Fand, My love ! Come back !

Emer.—Oh woe ! (falls in a heap).

Cuchulain.—Mother of the best powers in my soul. Come back. Thou wicked one.

Emer.—Woe ! Woe ! Forgive !

Cuchulain.—Never ! Until thou winnest Fand, in all her beauty, back to me ; thou slave of the black flame ! Oh, Lir, I see how it will be ; my pain and misery will bring my wife unto thy shining home. Woman ! thou shalt pay dearly for thy jealousy, seeing me weak, unable to succeed ; for Fand supported me when in my direst need.

Emer.—Oh woe ! Oh misery ! Thou cruel Fand.

CURTAIN.

CUCHULAIN'S DEATH.



SCENE—The large hall of a dun—in the Druid's soundless dell—the curtain does not rise at once for a Druid ; his pupils cross the stage chanting.



Chant.—Great Lugh ! protect thy son from being tempted and undone ; send densest fogs and baffling misty winds that none of their false battle clashing sounds shall reach him here. For Calatin's wicked children seek to stir his battle fire. And he would rush on death, where'er he be.

(A raven flaps slowly across the stage).

To stem a thousand men alone he would aspire. Great Lugh, give ear.

(CURTAIN rises. Cuchulain is lying on a couch, and the Druid, Cathva, is seated beside him. There are groups of women round, and one is singing to her harp. The raven-witch crosses unseen by anyone. It talks to Cuchulain, but to everyone else it sounds but the raven's croak).

(Cuchulain speaks this as though in a trance).

Raven Witch.—Dark Balor strides over Ulla, and thou liest here. Rise, Oh ! Cuchulain, and repel thy foe ! Hast thou grown fearful in this peaceful glen.

(Cuchulain springs to his feet).

Cathva.—Why dost thou spring so wildly from thy couch ; there's naught to make thee start.

Cuchulain.—I heard a voice above my head, and now I hear the clashing din of war. The greatest army Maive has ever raised is pouring o'er our land. Where is my charioteer ? (The girl sings louder, claiming his attention).

(Enter Niamh, whom Cathva has sent for to persuade him to rest).

Niamh (pronounced Niar).—Cuchulain, thou hast wounds that cause a fever in thy blood, and make thee hear false sounds. Let me entreat thee, rest until the morn, should there be need to use thy sword, then, I shall be thy guide unto the foe.

(The raven croaks, and Cuchulain becomes terribly excited).

Cuchulain (rapidly).—I hear the sounds of countless chariot wheels ; I hear the feet of many thousand men ; I hear the cries of Emer in our dun, and my arm here inactive ; I hear the war-cry of Laegaire : his men pour forward in an endless flow ; a river moving deep and strong. Oh, I must stem this scathing stream, or I will have a ceaseless misery. My King has made me champion for our land. Cathva, am I a coward badger slinking from the dogs. I must go search for Laeg !

(Cathva laying his hand on Cuchulain's shoulder to detain him).

Cathva.—Stay, son ! until I send to thine old nurse for the full cup. Thou shalt not go to battle save thou hast drunken deep and well. (He speaks to a girl who goes out. Then he gently presses Cuchulain down on the couch. The rest close round, and dance and sing to amuse him. By degrees he sinks to rest. Then the raven croaks once more, and he springs to his feet ; he shouts for his armour, and all is hurry. His brooch falls and pierces his foot).

Cuchulain.—Bring me my fighting gear. My arm is needed to protect our land. I am the shield for thousands of our clan—the right hand of the King.

Niamh.—Cuchulain ! these are demons of the Calatin Clan, and lies are what they breathe. I kneel to thee, and clasp thy knees ! craving thy patience 'till the coming morn. (Cuchulain repels her, and, walking up and down, speaks angrily).

Cuchulain.—Wife of victorious Conall ! Thou woman of a Druid race ! Thou art no chieftain's wife and hast no bravery. Nor art thou fit for aught save distaffry ! Go ! hide thee from the foe ! Thou hast the gleam of fear within thine eyes. Chase that false child of Calatin from thy noble breast. Shall we let foes pass on without a blow ? (She shrinks away, and Cuchulain turns to a girl).

Cuchulain.—Go thou and call my Laeg. (Exit girl). (Enter nurse).

Nurse.—Now let this draught bring peace upon thy heart. (Gives him the goblet).

Cuchulain.—'Tis empty ! thou art not often careless.

Nurse.—I am distressed. Give me the cup. (Fills it from a wine bowl). Here now, thou valiant nursling of my heart; drink deep. Never yet have I entreated thee to play the coward's part.

(Cuchulain puts it to his lips, and then pushes it away).

Cuchulain.—That wine is bitter; it hath cut my throat, as though 'twere made of knives! Bring me a draught from the pure spring.

(Exit nurse moaning).

(More singing and dancing; then the nurse enters with cup).

Nurse.—This water floweth from the pure well; drink deep and full, for I would have thee strong. May the great sword of Lugh be thine! (Cuchulain takes the cup, and looks into it as he is about to drink, and dashes it to the ground).

Cuchulain.—'Tis blood thou has given me! I will not try again!

Nurse.—Thou child of Rury! Offspring of the gods! These omens bid thee stay.

Cuchulain.—By the dead fathers of our land I will go forward. (Enter Laeg).

Cuchulain.—Laeg! I need my horses in the chariot; not for one moment shall I now delay.

(Enter Lavarcam, who drops upon her knees).

Lavarcam.—I bring the cry of three times fifty Queens within my heart. Upon their wailing breath I come to thee! Wilt thou forego this battle for their love?

Niamh to Lavarcam.—It is not true that Emer is in danger.

Cuchulain.—Her eye's beseeching gaze rests on my soul.

Lavarcam.—The hosts of Maive enter from the south.

(Enter Laeg).

Laeg.—Master, the Grey of Macha will not stand; I never have gainsaid thee till to-day, but canst thou go when he doth so forewarn? I swear by the god, by whom my people swear, though all the men of Concubar's strong fifth were round him now, they could not bring him to the chariot. Come then, if thou will go, and speak with the Grey himself.

(Exeunt Cuchulain and Laeg).

Lavarcam.—The curse of Macha, and the shame of Kimboack, shall lie upon the red branch.

Cathra.—Thou maid of speed hast seen the clans of Lugaid?

Lavarcam.—They wait upon the road a thousand strong, joining their shields across the mountain glen; at either corner Erc has placed two braves to feign at fight. A satirist shall stand between (knowing Cuchulain's pride of bravery) to ask him for his spear. Calatin has prophesied that spear will kill three Kings: he also has declared three Kings shall die before the break of the third morrow's morn.

(Enter Laeg excitedly).

Laeg.—Lugh, keep my master from this feast of Cernunnos. The omens bid him stay. Oh ! lay thy spell upon him, Druid.

Cathva.—We cannot make this warrior forget ! I cannot keep him here.

Laeg.—He met three crones all blind of the left eye upon his way ; they cooked the flesh of hound upon a spit. Thou knowest of Cuchulain's prohibition, never to take food upon the hearth whereon 'tis cooked. The geasa of his line also forbade ; our warriors dare not eat of him whose name they bear ; and so he hastened by.

Cathva.—As thus he did ; no harm shall come to him.

Laeg.—But the old witches called—"Stay with us a short while, thou chieftain of the mighty hand." He answered them—"I will not stay." and they—"Thou fearest ! for 'tis flesh of hound we eat ; a poor hearth this for one of famous deeds. Yet, 'tis unseemly for the great ones to despise the poor." He then partook of food with his left hand, and placed it under his left thigh ; the hand that held it and the thigh were stricken from trunk to end, and lost their strength.

Cathva.—Wrath and sorrow will be our portion if he should leave this glen.

Laeg.—When we came nigh unto the Gray, three times the noble steed turned his left side. Cuchulain then reproached him bitterly, saying he was not wont to treat his master thus. Then the great horse came and let his big round tears of blood fall at our chieftain's feet. He bowed

his proud and royal head upon the ground for love of him, and walked unto the chariot. Now (though 'tis Tethra's shade we seek) we long to do his will. Give me thy blessing, Cathva; for we go to death. (Cathva blesses him).

(Exit Laeg. Cuchulain's war-cry is heard).

(Here the war-cry is given in Irish).

SCENE—Cathva shading his eyes and watching from the door.

Cathva (pronounced Cahva).—There is a glory pouring from the three. Cuchulain's head is radiant; his many-coloured hair gleams like bright strings of gold over the anvil's edge; the light of valour hovers as a crown above him; his sword gleams brilliant red; they are a triad of magnificence. Lavarcam, thou Druid maiden of much speed, follow Cuchulain, and perceive his mighty course. (Exit Lavarcam). His wounds were burning as he left his couch! The cup was empty that his old nurse filled, and Concobar's own gift, the jewelled brooch, slipped from his hand and pierced him through. May Lir protect the three, for these are bodings that the best should fear! Lugh! child of sun! thou mighty long-armed one, whose sword dispels the mist, protect and clear the vision of thy son! Thou, warrior, hearken, and draw nigh! [A pause.]

Warrior Woman—I see a mighty dust upon the road to Emain Macha; it groweth now apace; 'tis Conall, the victorious, with Emer at his side!

Niamh.—It is the hand of Lugh. These two great men can stem a thousand men. (Noise of chariot wheels outside).

(Enter Emer and Conall. *Niamh* runs to clasp Conall).

Niamh (pronounced *Niar*).—My stay of battle! Thou art in time with thy victorious arm to succour the great comrade of thy heart, who went alone to stem the hosts of Maive. His old wounds flamed; the omens threatened him; the men of Ere will fall upon him, while the children of the Calatin Clan weave mists before his eyes. Thou art in time! It will be victory!

Emer.—The curse of Macha shall not hold thee here, oh, Conall Carnach! Son of chivalry! May all the blessings of our land clothe thee, and make thee strong.

Conall.—May Macha's curse pass by! Before the next sun rises o'er the sea there will be the wonderful great joy or sorrow in the land. For joy and sorrow hold alike a flaming destiny. Cuchulain will be joyous master of the glen, or mine will be a fiery misery, a living flame of terror—lonely ever more.

Cathva.—My son! victorious! strong! have peace! I lay my hand upon thy heart and clothe its strength.

(Exeunt Conall and Cathva.)

Emer.—The land stood breathless as we came. The birds all stopped their song, and now my heart, Cuchulain, stops for thee. I kneel to ye bright children of the Tirnanog. Great De Danaan Men, I call on ye to help Cuchulain now.

Woman.—The omens bade him not to leave his couch, oh woe ! his death comes nigh.

Emer.—Who saith Cuchulain's hands are weak ? his prowess is the flower of the land !

Woman.—The curse of Macha.

Emer.—I call to Fand ! Fand ! My star of beauty, thou child of Lir ! I call on thee to teach me how to help Cuchulain now. When thou and I join hands no hate can cleave his shield. Fand ! help me with thy mystic power and love to fight Cuchulain's aerial enemies.

(Enter Fand and to her Cathva).

Fand.—I am here with thee ! Cuchulain's need is now beyond all hate, he joins the De Danaan Men. The light of Angus Og shines o'er him now.

Emer.—Fand, bring me to Cuchulain.

(Enter Lavarcam, who goes to Emer and Cathva).

(All the women rush round them longing to hear, yet afraid to listen).

Lavarcam.—The wind of love and longing bore me all too soon unto the scene ; upon the road I met a grey and misty form flying to Sliab Fuad ; as it passed I knew it was the Grey of Macha whom the foe had slain. And I wept ! and then I came upon the men of Maive, and heard their words as our great Champion with his one black steed bore down upon them. Falsely they made battle 'mid themselves (she looks with a tranced eye into the future.) And this will be their curse ; to fight each other, wasting strength when in the direst need.

Cathva.—The knife of discord makes e'en truth a curse.

Lavarcam.—Then Lugaid asked Cuchulain for his spear. Our chieftain stood erect with fearless glance : both Charioteer and Warrior, his greatness hid all others from my sight ; my soul met his, and bowed in reverence. And Lugaid said, " Dost thou refuse, I will revile thy race." The hero answer came—" My honour is secure, this is the grace of wrath," and Lugh's great son sent flying his last spear, reversed, through thrice nine men, for nothing but Cuchulain's spear could kill Cuchulain and his comrades. Lugaid then drove it through the noblest of all men. (Here Cuchulain's death chant is begun by Cathva.)

Cathva :—

Our glory is laid low, our hope is stilled,
Nothing is left us now, all joy is killed,
The strong to dare and do—our willing shield—
Our Warrior who knew what the gods willed.
Woe ! Woe ! Woe ! Woe !

Lavarcam.—Then black Sainglend fled in horror and dismay, and left the chief of heroes there alone dying on the plain. 'Twas then I saw the wondrous, beauteous sight. A spirit from the lough arose, pointing toward a pillar on the plain : Cuchulain with his dying strength stood forth ; he bound his body to the pillar stone, defied his foes, and *standing* died.

Fand (in a whisper).—He lived a noble life. It was a truth. He leaves the land of strife to gain full youth.

Emer.—No ! no ! Cuchulain is not dead !

Lavarcam.—Then came the Gray of Macha in fierce wrath, and wrought the three red onsets round him, spreading destruction through his foes. (A keene bursts from all the women).

Niamh.—His blood shall not be cold upon green earth, before victorious Conall of the mountain top avenge him.

(Uttered as though she sees the scene before her).

I see as in a druid mist the death of Lugaid ; the downfall of his house, the ruin of his race.

Emer.—Setanta ! thou art dead ! Love is dead ! and I——

(Falls dead).

Fand.—Now thou sweet child of earth, throw off thy poverty, and come with me unto my father's land. My Tirnanog. At last I have thy faith ; no walls can keep thee in ; no passion bind thy love.

Niamh.—I see our mighty warrior reaching to the skies, his chariot is an orb of light, he rests his sword upon the mountain, waiting to do battle for his sleeping land, the sun behind the sun gleams on his blade, and lights her heart.

THE END.

OISIN THE HERO.



And so the sign of Aries departed and the power of the Fianna weakened. And after a great strong battle, the like of which none shall ever see again, Oisín the Poet alone was left.

Diarmuid, the lover, departed to the Inner World through the treachery of Fionn, and ever since that dark day the fortunes of the Fianna waned, until at last, after this great fight, Oisín alone was left, unwitting of the limits of disaster, sore wounded and nigh to death.

Weary and weak he looked for the others who might be left to heal his sickness, and as he staggered onward, to him came Niamh the Fairy. Fair was she and beautiful beyond all women, and her grace was as a pine upon a sunny hill side, and her laughter sounded as the breeze rippling through a great ash tree; and the sound of her weeping could make the whole world sad, even the joyous sons of Erin.

And she said—"Oh, Oisín! Oisín! you are grievously wounded; come with me and I will heal you with a ray of the sun and a beam of the moon."

But Oisín answered—"Queen of the mystic land, once upon your shores who can return? And as for me, I must stay to know of my brethren and of how they fared in that great combat; full of foreboding am I for their fate, sick for their comradeship, and I feel as one alone among weaklings."

And Niamh answered him, saying—"Oisín, you are of no further use to your people in your

stricken plight, and, indeed, you will presently die, if you come not away with me. I will pledge you my word, for the love I bear you, that you will come again to Erin, if you so desire, to find your people. You shall be whole and strong and worthy to help them."

And though Niamh knew that his comrades were all dead, and had indeed wept her first tears of sorrow at their defeat and loss, she told him not of her knowledge.

And so she mounted with Oisín upon a great, white, magic charger, swift as the thoughts of a young maiden to her lover.

And they rode across the land until they came to the beautiful west coast of Erin, and across the sea, until they came to the east coast of the Land of the Ever-Young.

There, for one day, Oisín feasted and rested, and Niamh the Fairy waited upon him, and used all her arts to lull the memory of his people and their distress within him; but as the evening came, Oisín felt the strength surging through his body and knew himself healed again. He thought of the heroes in peril at home, and rising from a soft cloud bank of blooms where he rested, said—"O, queen of the beautiful, your land is a wonder of wonders, I shall always carry it away in my soul, but my people call me home again to Erin; even now Oscar may be slaying with mighty blows in the strain of his battle fury; I would be there to help, and also to hear his great voice call like thunder rolling through mighty mountains and to see him strike like the lightning flash."

But she, the Queen of Fairy, said—"Oscar is dead, and sorrow have I to say it, and as he died the heaped-up bodies of his slain enemies were

high as the ramparts on the hills of Erin ; his greatest battle is fought, but he is dead."

And Oisín mourned and sang a glorious death song for Oscar the battle hero ; and then he asked for Fionn the wise.

But Niamh said—" Oh, Oisín ! Oisín ! even the wisdom of the great Fionn cannot overcome the law. Did he not leave your Diarmuid to die ? Were it not for that ye would have driven off the evil day.

" But weep not too much for Oscar. Be glad that he was of your blood, and surely his name shall live as the symbol of a hero, for his soul went out like a great brand of rushing fire, lighting up the whole of Erin with its glory and brightness ; and indeed he will never be far from you, his kinsman ; for when you see the rushing storm-clouds gather, he comes in their midst, and when the lightning flashes out he is drawing his sword, and when it strikes with its fire he has aimed the blow, and the thunder is his battle shout, and the sound of the great waves of the west and the forests of Erin in storm time is his war song. Remember it, Oisín.

" And when you hear the music running like a silver chord through all things, making the tree grow for the thrush and the flower for the bee, and when you feel the music that sings through all life expressing the full soul of the mother—it is Fionn in his wisdom. Remember it, Oisín.

" And when you see the clouds kiss in the sky, and the waters run together in the rivers, and the doves coo in the tree tops, a maid coming to her lover in the twilight ; and when you see a great, fierce battle, and a deed of mercy to

the enemy, or a friend succour a friend in danger, it is Diarmuid you see there, the beautiful Diarmuid.

"And when Venus shines in the night time, glorious and fair to look upon, it is Fionn in his wisdom.

"And when Mars is on high, it is Oscar in his highest.

"And when Mercury flies through the sky on the wings of the soul, it is Diarmuid approaching. Remember it, Oisín.

"Oisín, Oisín, indeed they are all dead, and with them die the last of the Great Ones who saw the inner glory of nature; the great race of heroes is gone to the inner world; no more will Oscar shout his battle song, and the golden head of Diarmuid glowing like the setting sun, shall shine no more in the forefront of the battle.

"Now, alas! over the land of Erin shall creep little, dull, blind things, calling themselves men; seeing nothing but the surface of the mother they will think they know her.

"Oisín, beloved, you who hear the sound of the growing trees, who know the mystic fire creeping through their inner parts to nourish the outer, who see the radiance in every leaf with wonder and delight; stay with us, Oisín, for the world is dark and bound in iron, we alone have the inner sight and are free from sorrow, old age, ignorance and hearing."

"Queen of glory," said Oisín. "I can no longer stay in your happy land, having so sad a heart within me; even now your wonderful land loses lustre through my gloom, and I must return to Erin, the land of sorrow and tears, for will she not always mourn for the return of

her great sons in their glory, and I must sing now their death song; it is for this that I was left behind."

"And rememberest thou not, Oisín, last of the heroes, rememberest thou not that one day of Fairy is two hundred years of earth and that the memory of your friends has already grown vague, weakened and lost?"

"Of what use to go now? Stay with us; you will not weep long here, for I will sing you to sleep under the tree of forgetfulness."

But Oisín raised his voice in indignation and sorrow—"I will not sleep your sleep of forgetfulness, beautiful lady, for I would rather have one hour of sorrow for my heroes of Erin than a lifetime here in your land of delight, forgetting their glory. Their death song waits, I must even go to chant its mourning rhythm, for what waits must come of a certainty."

"And I will teach these dark sons of our Mother with the blind eyes to see, and the deaf ears to hear her glories of the past; so that even they shall feel a little of that departed glory, and travelling over the earth keep living the remembrance of the heroes my comrades, and a knowledge of the inner, hidden splendour behind the world that seems."

"Lady, for the love you bear me, leave me the memory of the great and glorious past; where Diarmuid lived, and Oscar fought, and Fionn played the game of life."

And seeing that his will was set towards the land of sorrow, and that nothing could change his desire, the queen of beauty called her great white charger and gave him to Oisín.

But first she kissed Oisín thrice on the forehead, so the eye of his imagination would ever

be bright towards the land of Fairy ; and she charged him in all his doings in Erin never to step to the earth, for if he touched it he would become of the earth, and subject to time and change, and come not again to the Land of Youth.

Then he mounted the great white charger and took his last look on the beautiful land, and most beautiful of all, his Fairy Queen waiting for him there ; never again in life would he recline upon a couch of crimson, sunset cloud, with his beloved one beside him ; never again smell the faint incense floating around her, which was like the first opening of the budding trees in spring time ; never again would he watch her wonderful beauty half veiled by the garment of white sea mist which she always wore.

But the thought of her dwelt with him always, though he did not see her again until the last day, when she came to say her farewell to her lover and sing his death chant.

And when she sang of his stories and songs, the sound made the earth glad with a glorious sunrise ; and when she sang of his sword in battle, the heavens flashed with a great, red sun-set.

But when she sang of her sorrow and loss, the fog of the western sea covered the whole of Erin, cold and thick so that no man could see his neighbour.

And as the beautiful fairy sang thus, the voice of her song vibrated into the soul of Erin, and Erin also knew that her last great one had departed : then she, too, arose in her sorrow and came to her dead son and sang of him and his.

And Erin trembled with the mighty grief and sorrow of those two, to the rocks of her

shores ; and the sorrow of their loss dwells within the valleys of Ireland, and the glories of the departed upon her hillsides. And when the furze is in bloom Oisín sings in the morning, and when the heather is in its full colour Oscar chants of war ; and when the broom flowers soft upon the hillsides, it is Diarmuid singing of love and comradeship.

And so it is that in Ireland, the minds of the dark children of later years are tinged with an intangible sadness, from the past times of the Fianna.

For the kiss of the queen from the hidden isle of the west is upon the race ; did not Oisín bring it from that land of mist in the ocean ? And so it is that they see a gleam of gold in the sunlight, a shade of green in the meadow unknown to those of other lands ; and thus it comes that the people of the Inner World talk to them at evening in the mystical twilight.

And this is why the sons of Erin are ever in the forefront of a battle, and love the sound of a great, fair fight. For the sound of Oisín's stories of the Great Ones, the Heroes, are ever in their memories ; and the hills and valleys of Ireland still remember their tread, and the sound of their voices in song and story ; in the coming age that is nigh upon us, this very brooding over the great past, by the darkened sons of Erin, may then grow at last bright ; their eyes resume their seeing in the soul of the Mother, and their ears hear her heart throbbing under the brown covering of her bosom ; and perhaps in the fulness of time, Diarmuid, the lover, and his great brethren may come to us again and dwell with us for ever.

But of Oisín and his happenings on his great charger, more is to tell. For after the great queen had kissed him thrice, and he had mounted the white, fairy horse, he rode away from the isle over the billows of the ocean.

Sorrowful he went, thinking of his departed companions, and of his queen and of the mystic land; but at last, as he saw the great, dark cliffs of Erin's beautiful west coast, gloomy with mist and rain clouds, and wonderful with the thunder of great waves breaking upon her shores, his heart warmed for seeing her again, so lifting up his great, glorious voice he chanted the death song of the Fianna.

And the sea was his harp, and the sea birds helped him to wail for his dead.

Never before in all the world was a song like this for grandeur, for all nature wept with him, unwitting his great reason, but feeling its rhythm.

All that day and night he sang his song, the clouds rained in floods, and the waves beat high over the cliffs, and even the darkened sons of Erin felt the great sorrow within them, for his sorrow entered into all nature, and Ireland wept.

And as he struck the full, grand notes of his grief, Erin the Mother sounded ever answering chords in her bosom. The great trees swayed and bowed their heads, and the mountains shuddered in their anguish because of the song.

But the power of his singing and its musical rhythm is not for the dead outer world to understand; but we can catch a faint sense of its sorrow in the sad, lonely call of the plover, in the sound of the voice of the heron, in the keene of a mother lamenting.

And we catch a faint sense of its power in the voice of the forest in storm time, in the voice of the storm in the ocean, in the mystical peace of the mountains, and its memory remains in this song from the past as his chanting:—

Think of the heroes dead, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream, dream of our heroes dead, Ireland,
 Fighting died they, their blood is your sod,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Think of our heroes dead, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Fionn, *our* Fionn of wisdom is dead,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Gone, gone is the light from his head,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Think of our hero dead, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream, dream of our hero dead, Ireland.

Fighting died he, his blood is your sod,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of the hero dead, Ireland.

Oscar, Oscar, our hero is dead,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Where, where, is the light that he shed?
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Dream, dream of our hero dead, Ireland.
 Fighting died he, his blood is your sod,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother.
 Dream of the hero dead, Ireland.

Diarmuid, Diarmuid our lover is dead,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Gold, gold, was the light from his head,
 Dream of it, dream of it, Ireland.

Think of the hero dead, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream, dream of the hero dead, Ireland.

Fighting died he ; his blood is your sod,
 Think of it, think of it, Erinn my Mother,
 Dream of the hero dead, Ireland.

Mourn, mourn, for the heroes departed,
 Bow your head, bow your head, Erinn my Mother
 Shout all ye high cliffs of Ireland,

Heave, heave, sea ; your bosom of beauty, heave !
Heavily, heavily, wail out your sorrow,
 Wail for your heroes, oh Ireland.
Cover your green with rain cloud and fog,
Quake, through your heart's core, Island of Sorrow,
 Quake in your anguish, oh Ireland.
Remember their tread on your meadows of grass,
 Remember their voices, O Ireland ;
 Remember their voices of gold and of silver.
 Remember your heroes,
 Remember your heroes,
 Remember your heroes departed.

At last in the grey of a dawn he awoke from his song rhythm ; the death song of the Fianna was sung, and nature awoke from the mighty spell that Oisin had woven around her.

The great horse stopped, and stooping his beautiful head, his mane showing in the dawn like the white edge of a fleecy cloud, he drank a deep draught from a fountain by the way-side, and Oisin looking saw a favourite Fianna watering fount.

Oh ! how often had Diarmuid and the rest of the heroes watered their horses at this spot in the great past ; the old clear fountain, a friend of that time, overcame him with emotion.

He sprang to the ground and knelt beside its granite rim, resting his head upon it ; back through the past its memory drew him—that subtle, cold stone.

He lived in the past—in the past alone ; he argued with Fionn, sang and loved with Diarmuid, wrestled with Oscar who ever won by his skill.

After a long, long time, lifting his head, he saw a strange old face in the water. Who was

this white-haired man? so grand in his aged beauty; he looked long, the truth gradually dawning in his brain.

At last lifting his head he rose slowly and unthinkingly, looked for his horse, but it was gone.

"*Who touches the earth becomes of the earth,*" was it Niamh that spoke to him; or was it his imagination that fancied that she spoke?

For Oisín, the mystic, the poet—he who saw within the symbol the life of the symbol and its inner beauty, and beheld within the Mother and nature, and their hidden meaning—Oisín was of the earth.

The iron bonds enclosed him, but he had ever the memory of the great past to think upon; and Niamh's kisses upon his forehead still kept his inner perception clear.

Sad was his great heart, bursting with sadness; and his bowed, white head sought again the one relic of his comrades, and the days now so far away.

Alone in a dark, sad, changed Ireland, among a half dead-people, "with blind eyes to see, and deaf ears to hear," surely none had like cause for sadness.

But even as he brooded in the depth of his loneliness, a certain curious peace came upon him, and raising his head from the great stone it rested upon, he saw a tall man of the dark-haired race before him, who, lifting his right hand, said—"Peace to you, O great one from the wonderful past: I have seen somewhat of you in a dream of thy coming; welcome to thee poet, and hero, albeit untouched by Christ the Comforter.

“Come with me, son from a glorious time, and we will weep and laugh and be comrades together; for often I feel even here among my children, whom I have taught to follow the Christ; that we are dark, and blind, and deaf and weak, and it is as if I, too, had glorious memories behind me, of great days before the Age of Iron.

“Teach us of the past with its keen vision, and of the age of gold, old hero, and we will endeavour to help you to understand the present, and our great Christ.”

Thus Oisín, the poet, the seer, seeing the inner beauty of nature, found a place and a friend among the people who are dark; and there he learned, and taught of the form within the form, the sound within the sound; taught of the land of perpetual youth in the inner world, and from whence the heroes came and how they were made; learned of greater things than beauty and nature; learned of the Christ: and the Master, Patrick, taught him—a wonder among the dark men.

For Diarmuid had tried to speak of the Christ, though not by that name; but Diarmuid was indeed so beautiful and full of love himself, that all who listened to him of a certainty were filled with a love and reverence for him, and listened but carelessly to what he said of a higher than he.

For they were well contented with him, and they neither knew nor desired any other master, and thought not of a greater than he, and so all the Fianna were deaf to Diarmuid's words except Fionn, who knew in himself of their truth; and Oscar and Oisín, who, by

their constant companionship, had come to desire all their comrade Diarmuid desired.

Once to them, in a time of peace and contemplation, whilst lying on a beautiful hillside, Diarmuid had spoken these strange words :—" Dear comrades of my heart and blood, we pass and change, and come again, as little men in the darkness, because darkness is necessary to the knowledge of the light."

And Oisín understood not the words of his comrade Diarmuid, but remembered them always in the back of his mind. And Diarmuid ever turned away from any explanation of their mystery, except to say further :—" Oisín, Oisín, what is to be will be, and you only of all the Fianna shall know in the flesh the true meaning of my saying."

So Oisín, speaking with Patrick, remembered his comrade Diarmuid and his words, and was ever ready to learn and respond to his teaching ; but always he was the poet, the thinker—never the disciple, the follower.

Now, Patrick was engaged in a work of great moment for Erin, and for his teachings he was building the first church ever set upon Irish sod.

And Oisín watching, asked—" What house are you building with such care, Patrick ; is it for a place to store your corn ?"

" Not so," said Patrick, " the corn to be garnered here is of the Lord's planting ; this is the house of the Lord ; we build the first in Ireland, and we will swing a bell on top to awaken the land to better things, and we will worship Him here, through His Son, the Christ."

“But, Patrick, why do you build a house for the Lord, and to worship Him in? I am sure that He would rather be out here in the sunlight, where the birds sing, and the trees wave their strong arms in the storm time, than dwell in this house you are building, away from the air, and the sky, and the sea.”

And Patrick, with his hand resting upon the great hand of his new friend, said—“The Lord is every where, here we will worship Him; that is why we call it the Lord’s house.”

“But, Patrick, Patrick, how can anyone wish to worship in there, in the gloom? Come Patrick, come under the great oak there in the sun, on the hill side; there Diarmuid brooded in his silence upon that Great One who is behind what we see, and within what we know. Patrick, there is air and room, and life under the oak, and its leaves are green with the flowing sap, and the life behind the sap. Why go into the gloom? Come under the oak and worship.”

But Patrick said, “The joy of life would call our minds from the thoughts of God.”

And Oisín thought long over that strange saying, and remembered Diarmuid’s word, that “darkness was necessary to the knowledge of the light.”

One day the comrades were sitting under a tree together, for though Oisín would never call himself a follower of Patrick, yet did he love him better than all, for he alone was equal to him.

On that day, as they sat together, a beautiful thrush flew to a bough over their heads, and sang a glorious song of joy and promise, for it was the season of love with him, and his little

wife sat upon a nest of eggs near by, and his heart was full, and as he sang the Church bell tolled slowly and sadly, yet Patrick ever turned from the bird to the bell.

And Oisín said at last, hurt at heart, "Oh Patrick, Patrick, listen not to the bell with its tongue of iron and soul of brass; listen to the thrush; two hundred years ago he sat upon that same bough, and sang, as he does now, to Diarmuid and Fionn and Oscar. Listen to the thrush, with his tongue of gold and heart of love."

And, looking into the wistful face of Oisín, his comrade, Patrick forbore to praise his bell, for he knew how tender was the soul of his friend; instead he told the story of the Christ—His birth, and life, and death on the Cross by the hands of His own people, whom He came to save; how He was deserted by His disciples, and of how He was scorned, scoffed at, and reviled.

Indignation rushed red into the face of Oisín the Hero at Patrick's story, and, springing to his feet, he swung his great spear in shining circles, wishing for a foe.

"Oh, Patrick," he cried, "Patrick, why did He not come to Erin to found His kingdom, to the great and noble Fianna, instead of that coward race?"

"We would never have forsaken Him, but of His enemies' bodies we would have built a great, high cliff around all Ireland before one hair of His would have been disturbed by their living presence. To follow Him, to call Him Master, and then to betray and desert Him in

His hour of need ; spawn of cowards, why did He try to save such, Patrick ; why did He not come to Erinn ?

“Then, O Patrick, there would have been no disgrace in the sight of the Cross as there is now, and the days of the Christ would have been happy and long, and His teaching understood. For Diarmuid already was one of His, by reason of his great love, for, indeed, Diarmuid loved all things, none more than a strong enemy in battle.

“Many a time have I witnessed his weeping for the heroes he had slain ; and he ever spared the vanquished for his love.

“Oscar and I would have understood because of our love for Diarmuid, and Fionn would have understood because of his wisdom ; thus all the Fianna would have been His followers and none could have harmed Him ; and sure am I that sorrow would be heavy upon Him when the time of His going came ; and of a surety there would have been no such crime and horror upon man as this you speak of ; there would have been no Son of God crucified upon the Cross of shame, with nails in His beautiful flesh.

“No cock could crow in Erinn to tell of a disciple betraying his Master, and no one could be found in Erinn to betray or dishonour Him. Patrick, Patrick, why did He not come to Erinn ?”

And Patrick, deep in thought, answered—
“I know not the answer to your question, friend of my heart, unless it be that the people of Erinn were happy and contented, and had no craving for a better life than their own ; for

you say that they loved the sun and the earth, and a great fair fight when it came to their hand ; now the Jew loved not these things, but to buy and sell, and hoard gold and possessions, and he never had enough, and always craved something beyond. Perhaps, also, the Christ went to them because they were dark and needed Him most ; for are they not of Saturn, as you know of a certainty, Oisín, skilled in magic ?

“And now, Oisín, my brother, my heart desires nothing so much as that you should become one of Christ’s own. I will not call you one of my disciples, for, indeed, you are more of a comrade ; but surely it was for this that the wonderful marvel of your coming was given to us. What sayest thou ; is there ought in your mind against my wish ?”

And Oisín answered, after deep thought, “Patrick, I will even do as you desire, for sure am I that God is for all of us, even for those dark ones who betrayed, forsook, and crucified the great Christ ; though that is a hard matter to believe in one’s heart.”

And so Patrick set aside a great day of rejoicing for the baptism of Oisín, and all the Christians came to see him baptised, for Oisín was mysterious and wonderful in their eyes.

And when all was ready Patrick and Oisín came to the Holy Well and began to descend, but upon the second step, before he touched the water, Oisín stopped, and, turning to Patrick, he said :—

“Patrick, where are the heroes, my comrades ; where are the great Fianna ; are they

in Heaven, as you call your Blessed Isles? Tell me of a surety, for my heart is empty with their absence."

"Oisin," answered Patrick, "Oisin, my brother, thy people are not in Heaven, not with the Christ, and sorrow is thick upon my heart by that saying."

"And these dull ones with us here, where will they dwell after their death song is sung, Patrick?"

And Patrick said—"Even in Heaven as true Christians should."

"And I, Patrick, shall I have only these for comrades, and see no more of the great ones that I love?"

And Patrick was sad at heart, for he knew how his friend's mind was working, but he said, "You will come to Heaven, and be with us in the light."

"Patrick, Patrick, friend of my heart, I cannot go with you; your Heaven would be a sorrow without my comrades; my own people watch for me; free are they in the Inner World, in the wind, and the waters, and the earth, and the fire.

"My soul would hunger always with your followers for comrades. I who have known great heroes full of life. Diarmuid, my heart craves for your love. I will go to my own people, Patrick, but, indeed, I do not think that this great, white Christ could put Diarmuid the lover, glorious with his shining golden head, anywhere but by His side, whatever you say, O Patrick, if this Heaven of yours is true.

"Of a surety the Fianna will be there, for, certainly, it would not be a perfect Heaven

unless Diarmuid, full of love, was there, and Oscar, the battle hero; for who could get higher in Heaven than the fearless Oscar, and Fionn, by his wisdom, will surely be there.

“But, if it so happens that my people go not to your place, I will go with my own; for my heart hungers ever for Diarmuid, and for my beautiful Niamh, and all the great past before the time of little men and little things.

“But, sure am I that you are wrong in your saying about the Fianna and Heaven, for if this be true, that the Christ is to come to earth again, and that He is to rule supreme, which I do believe, who, think you, could fight that glorious battle with Satan, the Dark One, that you have spoken of as going before the rule of peace, the battle fury of which does the heart good to think upon.

“Who, of all your saints and martyrs, could make such a glorious fight for the Lord God as Fionn the skilled, full of wisdom, and Diarmuid of the shining head, full of love, and Oscar, of the heart of steel, in a great battle fury?

“Oh, in my heart surely is a great desire to see that fight, with Oscar, my kinsman, in the full front of the battle, fighting the great fight for the Christ against the whole power of the great Dark One: I think I hear his war-cry for such a fight, and his grand battle song; I think I see his sword smite, and his spear fly, and after the first days, when at last the full tide of that great war fury, which will surely be living in that great fight, comes to him, all the angels in Heaven, aye, even the great Sun himself, will have to stop, and look on in awe-struck admiration.

"I tell you, Patrick, when that day comes, if the Christ but give the word, Oscar will follow the Dark One to the very bottom of Hell and take his head.

"Not with a harp will he charm the fiends of Hell like that Greek hero you have spoken of; he was surely a man after my own heart, and he also must be missed greatly in your Heaven, and I very much doubt if your saints and martyrs will be able to make the same kind of music as he could.

"But Oscar, Oscar would not charm the evil ones with a song, but, with his great sword he would cleave the gates asunder, and the fire of his war fury would be fifty times hotter than the hottest place in Hell.

"Patrick, you are surely wrong when you think that we shall not be with the Christ, and as for me, I will die as I have lived, true to my people. But if you think that we will be out of Heaven and that last great fight, you are wrong, for your holy saints could not fight as we could; they could not defeat the devil like my people. We surely must be there, for it is our right.

"For your saints and martyrs only understood how to endure—they never were vanward in battle, and that you have said yourself many times; so think not, Patrick, that we are to be out of the way when the last great call to arms comes, for, indeed, we will be the first to answer that trumpet note.

"And think not that the Christ will refuse my people places in His great hall beyond the death mist, for surely we fought His fight in

our own way while on earth, and a glorious method we had in all our battles, Patrick, my brother."

After Oisín said this last great saying in defence of his own people to Patrick, he raised his right hand, commanding silence, and his face bore a far away expression, beautiful in a strong rapture, for he heard Niamh singing in the unseen, and thus she sang:—

"Come, come away, come away ;
Come to the home of the soul,
Into the heart of the sea,
Into the fire of the hill,
Into the joy of the wind.
Come, we can listen and hear,
The deep rhythmed breath of the world,
And the wonderful, cosmical sound,
That comes from the Sun as he turns.
Come, come away, come away,
Into the heart of the sea,
Into the fire of the hill,
Into the joy of the wind,
Into the Isle of the young."

"Heard you that music in the air? Patrick, my comrade! It calls me away from you to the secret world of Niamh; my Fairy calls me, and my time with you is nearly spent; my bones are old, and I am more dead than alive in this age of heaviness and death.

"And when I think of how the sun shone in the days of the great ones my brothers, how green was the grass, and how strong these old arms, I long with the strength of a youth for the hand of this maiden, for the fair hand of death upon my forehead.

"And now I go to freedom, and to my own people, to hear Fionn teach in his wisdom, see Oscar wrestle in the happy fields, and to bask

again in the light of the golden heart of Diarmuid; my Queen, too, is waiting in the land of the Ever Young, with its wonderful clouds of misty glory, and her never-forgotten beauty draws me back to her again.

“I wish to tell her of the Christ that is to come again; and of the glorious coming fight with the Evil One; but it greatly vexes me that I should die thus of old age and in quiet—I who have felt the seething rush of battle fury through my blood, and have shouted a great war song on many a furious battle field. I would rather die as my comrades died in that last great battle, when Oscar piled his dead in hills and mountains over Erin, so that the sun in his setting over Irish hills ever takes a red tinge in his face from a flash of joy as he remembers how those hills were made, and the glory of Oscar in his battle fury.

“But it surely consoles my heart, and after all, I shall die well content in the quiet of old age as I think this thought—that there is a greater battle before us than even that last great day, and that Fionn with his wisdom, and Diarmuid with head of gold, and Oscar with heart of steel, and I myself with the strength of my youth, have yet another day of glory before us.

“For there is yet another lesson for you and your followers to learn from my people, you who believe not in drawn swords, but that is a strange idea of yours to resist not evil, which is not to be thought of by my people.

“When that last great battle comes for which my soul yearns evermore, you shall learn this lesson, and Oscar, my kinsman, will teach you its power.

“The song of war, the drawn sword, the great, grand lust of battle, shall seize upon you, man of peace ; and you will follow ever in the wake of Oscar’s fiery battle rush, and shout your war shout, and swing your sword as a man should.

“For the Fianna will ever be in the forefront of the Lord’s great army, and Oscar in the front of the Fianna. So mourn not for me, brother of the dark race, because I do not choose to go to your Heaven of rest and peace, but rather choose the comrades of my youth and manhood as my comrades after death.

“For I will bring them your good tidings of the Christ, and of the great fight to come ; and you, my brother, do not forget when I am gone, and the memory of my coming to you retreats away into the dream mist, do not forget.

“That behind the blue of the sky dwells the sky the Fianna saw ; that behind the light of the Sun is the Light the Fianna knew ; that the oak has a light of its own, and the ash has a wonderful glow to be seen by the eyes that can see ; that behind the sound of the sea, and the sound of the wind in the trees the mother sings ever a note to be heard by the ear that can hear ; remember the hills are alive, and the mother’s heart beats at your feet, remember it, Patrick.

“Remember this beautiful air which you feel on your arms and your head, has an air which is far subtler too, to be felt but by those that can feel.

“Farewell, for I go to a cave known to my brothers the Fianna ; there I will sing my death song, read from the beautiful walls whence the great tone of memory sounds.

“My Queen from the Fairy Land will be there to chant when I go, our Diarmuid will also come to that hidden spot of life ; there is a mystic circle of stone, with a stone of power in its centre ; and twelve great stones are in that circle as signs ; heavy were they even for the great ones of the past ; and the Lodi, that stone of earth power, fashioned by Diarmuid and Fionn by their wonderful unknown powers.

“For you, ye sons of the dark race, must find these wonders yourselves, or the knowledge would be no good thing in your hands ; many of you will try to find that place, but few will see the secret of its nature, yet there will ever be one or two knowing its power so that it may not be lost.

“That knowledge is not yours, my Patrick, at this time, but if you were to come with me to this wonderful cave and lie in its peace, and touch the stone to your eyes, you would see the inner world of force, and if you could touch the stone to your ears you would hear all life at her work, and the wonderful note of creation.

“Touch the stone with your lips and you could sing within the song, and speak within the word so that the bird would come at your desire, and beasts and men be under your will ; also you could perceive by the stone and its mystery the magical way of nature. One day I think you will find our cave and become a wonder of men, but now I must go alone ; remember, Patrick, remember, friend of my heart, I am not far from you, for, indeed, we of the Fianna love our mother, our Erinn, and in the fight that is coming we would not leave her alone.

“ When you see order, the growth and life of the mother, Fionn has quickened your brain ; when you see how all life is tragic and at war, Oscar is near ; and when your heart fills with a golden glory, and you see all nature full of love, Diarmuid has touched you with his lips, his breath is on your head ; and when you feel an elusive beauty behind the beauty you see, it is Oisín, your comrade, that whispers in your ear.

“ And now the dark age deepens, and I pass into the wind and the hills and the sea, and the darkness of slavery will cover the world, and the free life in nature shall be no more, and Erin shall suffer most of all, for a nation of darker men shall set their curse and thrall upon her, and she shall suffer until the coming of the Christ. But her sufferings shall be her salvation, for because our people are bound in weakness and slavery, they will ever dream of strength and freedom ; and because their lives will be a darkness and a hardship, they will ever dream of beauty and glory.

“ And it shall come to pass that many of our sons and daughters will be drawn away from the land of dreams and dreamers, but they will carry their dreaming with them, and they will fight over the world for the poor and down-trodden, and they will keep the vision of freedom before the darker ones, and they will see ever in their dreams, and dreaming the secret Land of Youth, and the soul light of all things, and hear the hidden song that the brown earth sings as she weaves her garment of beauty.

“ And they shall tell the story of the heroes, the Fianna, and it shall be that their sorrow and wanderings shall keep the memory of

heroic days alive, to grow into the lives of the people of all lands, preparing the way for a wonder of wonders, of which I may not speak. Excepting to say that the mystic eye shall open again after its age-long sleep.

“Now farewell, my brother, and may the power of the Fianna awake in your heart to help you in the great work to be done.”

And so Oisin departed, and Patrick saw the grand, white-headed giant standing for the last time before the church, the sun sank in a red and fiery disk, covering him with a beautiful, golden glory, and when Oisin lifted his hands in a last blessing and farewell to Patrick and Ireland, Patrick’s heart was sad—sadder than if his church was in ruin, and his followers scattered to the ends of the earth.

And it is said that Patrick ever prayed for the old man Oisin, and would allow no word spoken in disparagement of him or of the great ones, his brothers of the past time, but rather said from this time forward, “That there were in the Father’s house many mansions,” and that one of these was the Blessed Isles of the Fianna; and Oisin’s great Inner World, and that it might well be that what Oisin said would come true at last, and that the Fianna would take a mighty part in the overthrow of the powers of darkness.

For surely the wonder of Oisin’s coming must have had some powerful reason behind it.

And from that time onward Patrick ever grew in inner perception, for he remembered the words of Oisin, and how his friend would never be far off because of his love for the sorrowful land.

(FINIS.)

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